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PRESBYTER JOHN.

BY M. D. CONWAY.

It is well known that the last chapter of the fourth Gospel did not belong to the original composition, but at what time it was added is not known. Near the close of this chapter it is related that Peter, looking at the disciple whom Jesus loved, asked, "Lord, what of this man?" Jesus is reported as answering: "If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee? Follow thou me." It is added, "This saying therefore went forth among the brethren that that disciple should not die." The writer calls attention to the fact that Jesus did not exactly so say, but he does not deny that the "beloved" disciple was still living. It is a remarkable fact that the name of this disciple nowhere occurs in the Gospel it labels. The compiler leaves us to identify "the disciple whom Jesus loved" for ourselves. I say compiler, for there are indications that different compositions between A. D. 120–150 were fused together by one hand into the fourth Gospel before the twenty-first chapter was added. This compiler, whoever he was,—it is a pity there is no clue to him,—was a Philonian enthusiast, whose aim was to detach the new religion from local and Jewish Messianism and give it a philosophical, mystical, and spiritual character. It will be noted that throughout there is a desire to exalt the "beloved disciple," without naming him; indeed, but for this particular Gospel it might be supposed that if Jesus had any favorite among his disciples it was Peter, to whom he is said to have given the keys of heaven. But here we learn of a disciple who leaned on his breast at supper, and to whom, while dying, he confided his mother, whose son he was to become. Another significant detail is the contrast suggested between the Beloved and the Traitor, into whom, according to this one narrative, Satan enters at the moment when the other is leaning on Jesus's breast at supper. Thus this unnamed Beloved Disciple, promoted to be the adopted son of Mary in the place of her departed son, becomes the Divine in opposition to the adopted son of Satan, Judas. John and Judas become spiritualised as Light and Darkness, miniature Christ and Antichrist, and in later centuries they both reappear in variants of the Wandering Jew legend. For there was in Christian mythology a holy undying one as well as an accursed eternal wanderer.

I will now venture a hypothesis concerning the fourth Gospel. For a generation or two before and after the movement of John the Baptist and Jesus in Jerusalem, and of Philo in Alexandria, it had become a literary trick of religious controversialists to pretend the discovery of one or another ancient book, written by some famous worthy of their race, and containing testimonies to their views. This fashion was set in the book of Daniel, which was followed by books ascribed to Enoch, Elias, and Solomon. Enoch and Elias were supposed, like John, to have never died. (Much in the same way Joe Smith pretended discovery of the book of Mormon, an eternal wanderer, who had found his way into the New World, and awaited the arrival of the whites here, and "the fulness of time" for his revelation.) Now my hypothesis is that the compiler of the fourth Gospel meant to avail himself of the widespread rumor and superstition that "that disciple should not die" to give authenticity to his Gospel. But he utilised it only to a prudent extent. Had he pronounced the Beloved Disciple by name to be John and declared that he was still living, some might have investigated the matter and proved the time and place of John's death. But by not naming John, and by saying that the Beloved had "testified of these things," he safely implied only that John had lived to a great age and had transmitted through some younger follower the most authentic account of Jesus and his teachings. It was using the myth of John's survival as that of Enoch's survival had been used before the birth of Jesus. The writer was thus able to pretend he had obtained through the aged John the sanction of Jesus for his Alexandrian Christian philosophy.

The legend that St. John never died gave birth to another and a mythical John, called the "aged John"—Presbyter John. In mediæval belief, however, Presbyter (i. e. aged) John resumed his earthly immortality as "Prester John." And it is a striking illustration of the tremendous power of a fiction that this forgotten superstition of an undying John not only moulded the Christian consciousness of the world but had much to do with the world's exploration. The

saying that "went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die," led to the rumor of the Beloved slumbering at Ephesus, evoked him thence to inspire a Gospel, and created an imaginary successor in Presbyter John, who, as a fabulous Prester John, fascinated the mediæval imagination, and probably led to the discovery of America by Columbus. Prester John was supposed, by reason of his supernatural longevity and sanctity, to have become monarch of the larger part of the world (the unknown part); and so strong was this belief that in the thirteenth century some ingenious romancer, in unconscious imitation of the writer of the fourth Gospel, wrote a letter purporting to be from Presbyter John, which was addressed to various crowned heads and to the Pope (Alexander III.). The following extracts from the letter will convey an idea of the mental condition of the European upper classes to which it appealed. It will be seen that the writer is learned and astute enough to discard the popular appellation "Prester" John, "Presbyter" being more impressive to the Pope.

"I, Presbyter Johannes, the Lord of Lords, surpass all under heaven in virtue, in riches, and in power; seventy-two kings pay us tribute. In the three Indies our Magnificence rules. Our land streams with honey, and is overflowing with milk. In one region grows no poisonous herb, no scorpion exists, nor does any serpent glide in the grass, nor any animal that injures any one. The river Indus, encircling paradise, spreads its arms in manifold windings through the provinces. Here are found emeralds, sapphires, carbuncles, topazes, chrysolites, onyxes, beryls, sardius, and other precious stones. Here grows the plant Arsidos, which, worn by any one, protects him from evil spirits. At the foot of Mount Olympus bubbles up a spring . . . three days' journey from paradise: if any one tastes thrice of this fountain, he will from that day feel no fatigue, and so long as he lives will be as a man of thirty years. Here we found the small stones called Nudiosi, which, borne about the body, prevent the sight from waxing feeble, and restore sight when lost. . . . In a certain plain is a fountain which purges Christians of all transgressions. With us no one lies . . . no vice is tolerated. . . . Over the gable of our palace are two golden apples, in each two carbuncles, so that the gold may shine by day and the carbuncles by night. Before our palace stands a mirror: we look therein and behold all that is taking place in every region subject to our sceptre."

I have quoted from this thirteenth century hoax the passages most likely to interest readers of *The Open Court*, but it was the account of gorgeous treasures which most attracted the adventurers of that time. When Columbus reached the West Indies (whose very name is a relic of "the three Indies" of the above letter) he cared little for the land or natives, but searched long for a mighty prince on a golden throne, who may be easily identified as Presbyter John.

THE ABSOLUTE.

BY HUDOR GENONE.

Some who call themselves atheists deny the existence of an ultimate authority of conduct, and, considered as a bodily being, they are right.

But such people when they do a sum in mental arithmetic admit the incorporeal existence of mathematics. When they analyse a substance they are consenting to the great fact of an overruling chemistry.

Mathematics and chemistry are spirits to be propitiated, if you choose, by sums and equations, analyses and syntheses, and "worshipped" by diligence and devotion, with faith in the spirit of principles, works in the process, and thanksgiving for results.

The sophistry, commonly called a paradox, contained in the fable of Achilles and the tortoise, and in the cissoid of Diocles and the asymptote seems to me transparent enough. The endeavor to solve it rationally is like trying to see with the ears or taste with the eyes.

The answer is true mathematically,—the result can never be. In that case the solution is a function of relation. The answer is also true physically,—the result must be. In that case the solution is a function of action.

Superficially action seems a form of relation; but it is really radically different. Relation is static; action dynamic. Relation is the constancy of rest, or the variant of motion; but action is that which changes relation, which moves or arrests movement.

The "spirit" of relation is accuracy, justice or right. The "spirit" of action is power, whether force or energy, or forces or energies.

But besides these two "spirits" Relation and Action, which are basic, ultimate, and unconditioned in their originality in the universe, is a third—the "spirit" of Volition, which is quite self-evidently neither relation nor action; but that which impels to change of relation, and which whatever its form is essentially motive or will.

I. Relation is that which is;
Its God is I AM.
II. Action is that which does;
Its God is I MAKE.
III. Volition is that which wills;
Its God is I LOVE.

These three are the primal triad of principle; self-existing, without creator or destroyer, without father or mother, or beginning of days or end of life.

IV. And these three are one, for this trinity of principle is essential to unity of being.

V. This Being is spirit, and this spirit is God.

This category, which has the audacity to claim for itself infallibility, may be confounded with that of Spinoza or the speculative rhapsody of Swedenborg; but after all only Aristotle and Kant approximated to the scientific category, and even they only approximated.

These, and all other thinkers of whose thoughts the writer is aware, have seen visions and dreamed dreams. They have seen the seven hued bow of truth clearly as it appears, but of the reality back of appearances, the simple science of ultimate certainty,—nothing.

Having now the three ultimate principles and being satisfied that they are axiomatic we are prepared to deduce by processes as rigorously logical as those of geometry, problems, and theorems with their corollaries in the domain of the science of religion.

VI. The Union of Relation and Action produces Law.

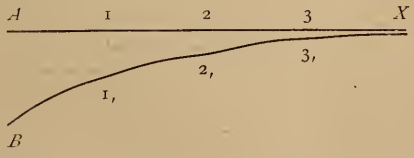
VII. The Union of perfect relation, which is Justice, with perfect action, which is Power, produces perfect Law, which is Wisdom.

VIII. The Union of Relation and Volition produces Character.

IX. The Union of perfect Relation—Justice, with perfect Volition—Love, produces perfect Character—Equity.

X. The Union of Volition and Action produces Nature.

XI. The Union of Love and Power, perfect forms of Volition and Action, produces Life, the perfect form of Nature.



The above diagram of the asymptote may serve to illustrate nature in its threefold departments. First, the Right line, AX, inflexible, fixed, rigid, implacable, having a perceptible location at A where we perceive, or conceivable where we conceive, and being prolonged in theory to X, supposed to be infinitely distant, representing RELATION. Second, the curve BX, so related to the right line as to continually approach it and become tangent at the infinite distance X.

As this line changes its direction and therefore relation to the line AX at every point, it represents with accuracy ACTION. Third, that region, which is neither rigid being, nor continuous change,—the region of "spirit," of the infinite, of VOLITION, is represented by the continuous effort to reconcile Relation and action; the constant progression of evolution.

This is the region of the science of religion, the region of the paradox, where the inconceivable is as certain as the inevitable; where loss is not failure, but success, where, like Columbus, we sail west, confident of finding there our orient.

Politics, economics, ethics, all these and more are practical departments of this realm. These are religion's industrial arts, which can only be carried to perfection when the truth upon which they must be based to make them effectual is recognised as science.

Faith in axioms is the foundation of exact science. Credulity no longer imposes upon thought; science does not profess beliefs, it states facts.

That which in ourselves we recognise as consciousness is a function of the three absolute existences. We combine in our individual unity the trinity of relation in our being, of action in our energies, and of volition in the motives that move us.

When I discern an eternal principle for each temporal incident; when I see the accuracy with which all the phases and forms of nature perform their tasks; when I see how immeasurably more intelligent the "atom" is than I, the conclusion is irresistible that the universe is endowed with more than intelligence.

That consciousness which is fulfilled in all living cannot fail with life itself. There may be no *a* God; but there is God, and that Being is more than conscious. He is consciousness self.

THE INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHISM INTO JAPAN.

The Rt. Rev. Shaku Soyen of Japan sent us a short time ago a tastefully bound book, entitled *History of the Empire of Japan*, compiled and translated for the Imperial Japanese Commission of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, U. S. A., 1893. The book is perhaps the only source of Japanese history that is accessible to those not versed in Japanese and Chinese literature. It contains nine chapters, compiled by various Japanese scholars and translated into English by Captain Brindley, editor of the *Japan Mail*. The volume contains a map of Japan, several photogravures of Japanese views, reproductions of ancient pictures of Japanese emperors and reformers, designs of historically important buildings, and various colored prints showing the life and customs of the country. It is to be regretted that there is neither an index nor a table of dates in which a reader whose time is limited might find some preliminary information, and even the Table of Contents is insufficiently arranged. Thus it reminds us of European books, which one has to read through in order to find the various items of interest. The reader must supply the missing table of dates in order to reduce the rich chaotic material to

order. We hope that soon some Japanese historian will fill these deficiencies.

The history of Japan is very interesting on account of the many parallels which it affords with the history of Europe; there is this difference only that there were comparatively more prominent women in Japan, who, like Queen Bess, have accomplished great things for their country. The Japanese had their mediæval times and feudal institutions. The introduction of Buddhism brought to them a higher civilisation from China, as much as Christianity introduced to the barbarians of the North the civilisation of Rome. The universality of Buddhism widened the intellectual horizon of the people, and it conquered their minds, partly by its noble morality and partly through the sword, which some of its adherents were ready to use. The imperial power, although nominally always supreme, was rapidly overshadowed, first, by powerful aristocratic families and then by military leaders. To the former, Japan owes the development of a refined civilisation, of luxuries, of the arts and literature; to the latter, a feudal system of lieges and vassals, quite similar to the feudal system of Europe. Japan had her *major domos* as much as the Franconians at the time of the father of Charlemagne. There were ex-emperors and counter-emperors, civil war between the nobles, internecine strife between brothers and cousins, not unlike the War of the Roses in England. And the historical outcome of these institutions lasted in some shape or other until recent times, when it was abolished by the present emperor, who opened the country to Western civilisation. Japan enjoys now a constitutional government similar to the governments of Europe, and has adopted Western principles for its State administration, education, and the judiciary. Religious liberty has been proclaimed, and modern inventions are utilised to an astonishingly great extent.

We recapitulate here that episode in the history of Japan, which is likely to be most interesting to our readers, "the introduction of Buddhism into Japan." It certainly is the most important fact in the evolution of the nation, as it has not less influenced the character of the Japanese than the introduction of Christianity has moulded the European civilisation.

The history of Japan begins with the Emperor Jimmu, 660 to 585 B. C. He inherited from olden times the three insignia of sovereignty, the jewel, the mirror, and the sword. Fearing that they might be lost or defiled, he had fac-similes made for common use in the throne-room, while the original insignia were deposited in a shrine at Cassanui in Yamato, where one of the imperial princesses was intrusted with the duty of guarding them. Subsequently the sacred objects were removed to the shrine of Isa, where the jewel and the mirror exist still. The sword, however, was transferred to the shrine at Atsuta in Owari, where it still exists. The imitated sword was lost during the civil wars by one of the emperors who, while pursued by his enemies, was shipwrecked and drowned. Jimmu conquered the barbarians of the North and the South, and is still remembered by his people as "the first country-pacifying emperor."

Japan remained in a very primitive state until an expedition to conquer Corea was undertaken by Emperor Chuai. The immediate cause of it was that the Coreans had assisted the Tsukushi rebels. The Emperor died, but his widow, the Empress Jingo, kept her husband's death secret and accomplished the conquest of Corea. She remained regent of Japan after her husband's death from 201 to 270 A. D. Corea having been subject, prior to its conquest by the Empress Jingo, to the Chinese, and having been in contact with them for a long time, the Coreans were quite familiar with Chinese literature, and as communication between Corea and Japan increased, many Coreans settled in Japan, where they became useful as instructors in various trades and in writing. Japanese annals attribute the beginning of Japanese literature to this period; and we are informed that in 218 A. D. a celebrated scholar called Achicki visited Japan and was appointed by the Emperor Ojin tutor to his son Wakairatsuko.[1]

At the suggestion of Achicki, another learned man, named Wani, was invited to settle in Japan; and Wani, it is said, brought with him blacksmiths, weavers, and brewers, as well as ten copies of Lon-yü (the book of arguments) and one copy of Chien-tsa-wen (the book of the thousand characters). Under Wani's instruction the imperial prince acquired a thorough knowledge of these Chinese classics, and this is the first instance on record of teaching Chinese literature in Japan.

The next great event, arising from Japan's connexion with Corea, was the introduction of Buddhism under the reign of Emperor Keitai, 507–531 A.D. There came to Japan from the State of Southern Lian in China a man named Sumatah, who settled in the province of Yamato, and, being a profound believer in Buddha, propagated the doctrines of Buddhism. But the people regarded Buddha as a foreign God, and no one embraced the new religion.

In the year 555 A. D. the King of Kudara in Corea sent an image of Buddha and a copy of the Buddhist Sutras to Japan with the message that the religion of Buddha excelled all other religious beliefs, and that boundless blessing in this world as in the next was in-

[1] According to page 31, the Empress Kogo (on page 80 called Empress Jingo) reigned, as stated on page 41, sixty-nine years, after which time Ojin, her son, succeeded to the throne. Here, on page 43, we are told that Ojin was emperor in the year 218 A. D. We have no means of deciding which statement is the most trustworthy. Similar contradictions, especially in dates, occur in other parts of the book. Frequently empresses are called emperors, which appears to be a misprint or mistake of the translator.

sured to his disciples. Much impressed by this message and the gifts accompanying it, the Emperor was disposed to worship the image, but before doing so he summoned his ministers to debate the advisability of the step. Soga-no-iname, the prime minister, expressed the opinion that as all western nations worshipped Buddha there was no reason why Japan alone should reject his doctrine ; but other ministers of State opposed him, saying, that the Japanese had from the most ancient times worshipped celestial and terrestial deities and that if reverence were paid to an alien deity the wrath of the gods of the land might be provoked. The Emperor approved of the latter view, but it seems that a dim idea of the importance of Buddhism had seized his mind, for he gave the image of Buddha to Iname with the permission to worship it by way of trial. Iname was greatly pleased with the behest, and at once converted his residence into a temple.

Unfortunately the empire was soon afterwards visited by a pestilence which swept away a number of the people, and as the State ministers represented to the sovereign that this was an obvious punishment inflicted by heaven, the temple was burned and the image of Buddha thrown into the water of the canal in Naniwa.

The Emperor, however, did not altogether abandon his preference for the worship of Buddha, and Iname sent secretly to Corea for another image. His son Soga-no-umako who succeeded his father Iname as prime minister, again built temples and pagodas dedicated to Buddha. But again a pestilence visited the country and the sons of the old State ministers again averred that the pestilence must be attributed to the worship of Buddha by the Soga family, the family of the prime minister. An imperial rescript was issued prohibiting the worship of Buddha. All the temples and pagodas dedicated to the foreign god were burned, and the images were again thrown into the canal of Naniwa. But the remedy proved useless ; the people's sufferings were not relieved, and in addition to the old trouble a plague of boils ensued, the pains of which resembled that of burning, and so old and young alike came to the conclusion that they were now the victims of a punishment for burning the shrines of Buddha. Buddhism apparently had already taken a powerful hold upon the popular imagination.

Soga-no-umako applied for and received permission to worship Buddha with his own family; and the Emperor Yomei, on ascending the throne, suffered so much from bodily infirmity that the idea of worshipping Buddha occurred to him. He found so many adherents of the new creed among his ministers that they could easily induce him to suppress all opposition with the sword. Nakotomi Katsumi, a leader of the anti-Buddhist party, was killed, while Prince Shotoku together with Soga-no-umako attacked and conquered the anti-Buddhist party and deprived them of their influence.

Under the reign of the Empress Suiko (191–629 A. D.), the spread of Buddhism was much encouraged by the court. The crown prince, the princess of the blood, and ministers of State had images of Buddha made. In the year 607 A. D. the Empress Suiko sent to China where the Sui dynasty was reigning, to obtain copies of the Sutras, and this was the commencement of the intercourse with China.

The preamble of the dispatch sent on that occasion from the empress of Japan to the sovereign of China was couched in the following words : "The Sovereign of the Empire of the Rising Sun to the Sovereign of the Empire of the Setting Sun, sends greeting." And there is scarcely a doubt that this was the origin of the country's being called Nipon (Japan), which means "land of the rising sun."

Buddhism now began to flourish greatly, and for the purpose of superintendence the offices of Sojo (archbishop) and Sozu (bishop) were established. In the year 627 A. D. there were forty-two temples, eight hundred and sixteen priests, and five hundred and sixty-nine nuns in Japan. And as Buddhism spread, the Confucian philosophy grew by its side.

Buddhism wrought a complete change in the character of the nation. A greater charity and benevolence had seized the minds of the Emperor, of the powerful, and of the rich. It is said that the erudite Emperor Nintoku dwelt for three years in a dilapidated palace in order that his people might have relief from taxation and might know the love his learning had taught him. The prosperity of the nation, his Majesty said, was his own prosperity ; therefore, the poverty of his people must also be his own.

Before the introduction of Buddhism "the people's conception of religion had been of a most rudimentary character.[1] They merely believed that the gods must be revered, relied on, and feared. In their simple faith, they attributed every happy or unhappy event, every fortunate or unfortunate incident, to the volition of the deities ; to whom, therefore, they offered sacrifices that evil might be averted. Thus we find it recorded that when the Emperer Sujin worshipped the gods, a pestilence prevailing throughout the land disappeared and health was restored to the people. The Emperor Chuai, again, failing to comply with the mandate of heaven, died suddenly, whereas the Empress Jingo, obeying it, achieved the conquest of Corea. In a word, the men of olden time believed that the world was governed by deities wielding supernatural powers, and that everything, whether good or evil, emanated from them. This faith inspired the worship that heaven received. It was believed, also,

[1] Quoted literally from the *History of Japan*, pp. 57–59.

that the gods resembled men in appearance and conducted themselves like human beings; out of which faith grew the firmly entertained conception that some men were scions of the deities, and that the deities themselves were of various species. In the highest rank stood the Celestial and Terrestial Gods; in the lowest, certain wild animals and venomous snakes, which were also propitiated by worship. The term *Kami* (god) had many significations. The hair of the head was called kami, as was also the upper part of any object. In later times, the governors of provinces received the same appellation, and the government itself was designated "*Okami.*" In brief, the word was employed to signify anything above or superior. When the Emperor Jimmu reigned, no distinction existed between gods and men; nor did the national conception of a deity undergo any material change after the introduction of the Confucian philosophy, the tenets of which offered no contradiction to the ancient idea. But, although the leading doctrine of Buddha—as, for example, 'Thou shalt do no evil thing,' or 'thou shalt do only that which is good'—marked no departure from the teachings of Confucius, Buddhism told of a past and of a future; announced the doctrine that virtue should be rewarded and vice punished in a future state; and taught that Buddha was the Supreme Being, and that whosoever had faith in him should receive unlimited blessings at his hands. All this differed radically from the pristine creed of the Japanese. They had hitherto held that above all, and to be reverenced and feared exclusively, were the deities and the sovereign. The ruler being regarded as an incarnate god, his commands had received the implicit obedience due to the mandates of heaven. But when the creed of Buddha came, the sovereign, hitherto the object of his subjects' worship, began himself to worship the Supreme Being. Nevertheless, so deeply had the old reverential awe of the deities struck its roots into the heart of the people, that on the first appearance of a pestilence they counted it a punishment of the gods of the land, destroyed the images of Buddha, and burned the places consecrated to his worship. But with fuller knowledge of the Buddhist doctrines, came a growing disposition to embrace them. Only a few years after the rejection of the foreign faith on account of a pestilence, we find the Emperor Bidatsu interpreting the sickness of Umako as a sign that the worship of Buddha must be permitted to that minister, and after the lapse of another brief interval, we have the people themselves inferring that a plague of boils had been ordained by the Buddha. The Emperor Yomei was a devout Buddhist, and in his reign Prince Shotoku, among the princes of the blood, and Soga-no-Umako, among the ministers of the crown, were conspicuous devotees of the faith, while Mononobe Moriya, Nakatomi Katsumi, and other anti-Buddhist leaders, met with violent deaths. Ignorant folks, observing that the sovereign himself, as well as his chief ministers, believed in Buddhism, and seeing the golden images of Buddha, the imposing structures where they were enshrined, the gorgeous paraphernalia of the temples, and the solemnity of the rites performed there, were awed into faith; while the cultured classes were gradually won over by study of the profound and convincing doctrines of the creed. . . .

"The progress of the imported creed was materially hastened by a rescript which the Emperor Suiko issued, inculcating its propagandism. Prince Shotoku also contributed to the movement, for, in 604 A.D., he compiled a constitution of seventeen articles, based on the doctrines of Confucianism and Buddhism. This was the first written law in Japan, but it differed from the laws promulgated in subsequent ages, inasmuch as instructions as well as prohibitions were embodied in its text"; in other words, they were rather religious injunctions than legal ordinances.

The introduction of Buddhism, and the relations established thereby with China, gave a powerful impulse to the civilisation of Japan. Chinese keramists started the idea of art pottery. Swords were forged with great skill. After the conquest of Corea, many workers in metal were imported into Japan, and iron articles of large size began to be manufactured. With the demand for the Buddhist images, the goldsmith's craft made rapid progress. Tanners emigrated to Corea during the reign of Ninken. They settled in the province of Yamato, and dressed hides of all kinds. Later on, Chinese tanners introduced the art of making saddles and various other articles of leather. The manufacture of paper, ink, whetstones, and dies was taught by a Corean priest, in the reign of the Empress Suiko. For the embellishment of Buddhist worship, Prince Shotoku encouraged also the teaching of foreign music. Painting was taught by Chinese artists, who arrived under the reign of Emperor Yuryaku. Most of them devoted themselves to religious subjects, and Buddhist piety gave a powerful encouragement to their art. The Empress Suiko sent young men to China to study medicine, and since that time Chinese therapeutics was generally practised in Japan. We read on page 75 of *The History of Japan*:

"A notable factor in the development of material prosperity at that epoch was the extraordinary ability of the priests. Many of them made voyages to China to study the arts and sciences of that empire, and on their return to Japan travelled up and down the land, opening regions hitherto left barren, building temples, repairing and extending roads, bridging rivers, establishing ferries, digging ponds, canals, and wells, encouraging navigation, and contributing not less to the

material civilisation of the country than to the moral improvement of the people. It may be truly said that the spread of Buddhism was synchronous with the rise of art and science. Carpenters, from the practice acquired in building temples, learned how to construct large edifices; sculptors and metallurgists became skilful by casting and graving idols of gold and bronze; painting, decorative weaving, the ornamentation of utensils, and the illumination of missals owe their expert pursuit to the patronage of Buddhism; the first real impetus given to the potter's art is associated with the name of a priest; in short, almost every branch of industrial and artistical development owes something to the influence of the creed."

It is natural, however, that the priest often made a wrong use of the devotion of the people. Of the Engi era (901–922 A. D.) we read that they became inflated by the reverence received. The temples came into possession of extensive estates, disputes arose among the sects, and military forces were maintained at some of the monasteries, for both aggressive and defensive warfare. When the Lord High Abbot of a temple was appointed by the Court, it became customary that, if priests, according to their right, objected, they came clad in armor, with bows and spears, to the palace to present their grievance. They developed such independence that they did not shrink from resorting to violence—a conduct which caused the Emperor Shirakawa grave anxiety, for he was unable to check their lawlessness. On one occasion, lamenting the arbitrary conduct of the clergy, the emperor said: "There are three things in my empire which do not obey me; the waters of the Kamo river, the dice of the Sugoroku players, and the priests of Buddha."

We know of the same or very similar incidents of high and low ecclesiastic warriors in our own history of the Middle Ages.

During the Nara epoch many glyptic artists were famous for their skill in sculpturing idols; lacquerers and sword-smiths carried their industries far beyond ancient standards of achievement. We read in *The History of Japan*:

"It is further worthy of note that the methods of manufacturing glass and soap were known in the eighth century. Nara and its temples, remaining outside the range of battles and the reach of conflagrations, have escaped the destruction that periodically overtook other imperial capitals, so that those who visit the place to-day can see objects of art in daily use more than a thousand years old.

"Simultaneously with the progress thus made in art and industry, learning received a great impetus. The Emperor Tenchi was the first to appoint officials charged with educational functions, and in accordance with the provisions of the Taihoryo or reform-legislation, promulgated in his time, a university was established in Kyoto, as well as public schools in the various localities throughout the provinces."

As the old deities of the country still exercised a great influence upon the minds of the people, attempts were made to conciliate Buddhism with the belief in the popular gods. "In earlier days, Ryoben, Gyoki, and other priests had preached the identity of the Shinto deities and the Buddhist god. Saicho and Kukai pushed this doctrine still further. They taught that the Hotoke was the one and only divine being, and that all the *Kami* were manifestations of him. On that basis they established a new doctrine called *Shinto*, or the way of the deity, the tenets of which mingled Shintoism and Buddhism inextricably. In consequence of the spread of this doctrine, it became a not uncommon occurrence to find Buddhist relics in a Shinto shrine, or a Shinto idol in a Buddhist temple, while the names of the Shinto deities (*Kami*) were confused with Buddhist titles."

One of the greatest effects, however, of the rise of the new civilisation was the political reorganisation of the Empire, involving the administrations, and the political and social conditions of the whole country. It is known as "The Taikwa Reformation" which was elaborated by Prince Naka-no-oye. It abolished the old primitive methods of administering the country by local chiefs or head men and established a regular government distributing the various functions between the ministers of the left and the right and the ministers of the interior and the eight administrative departments, which are: (1) the department of records; (2) of ceremonies; (3) of administration; (4) of home affairs; (5) of military affairs; (6) of justice; (7) of finance; and (8) of the imperial household. A census was introduced, agrarian measures were taken to enhance agriculture, boxes were set up at various places wherein the people were invited to deposit statements of grievances from which they suffered, and it was provided that a man who desired to bring a complaint speedily to the notice of the authorities should ring a bell hung up in a public building. As the officials were selected by merit, abolishing the system of hereditary succession, noble families were deprived of many privileges; still the aristocracy was benefited by the conservatism of custom. The Taikwa Reform remained the basis of the Japanese constitution, although later centuries were marked by the rise of several powerful families, the Funjiwara family, the Minimoto clan, the Tiara family, the Hojo family and others, who frequently succeeded again in making offices hereditary, and in playing the rôle of *major-domos*." (See page 110.)

We conclude our sketch with a brief notice of the progress made at that period in writing, which proves

that the Japanese were not mere disciples of the Chinese but original thinkers and independent inventors.

The ideographic system of the Chinese proved insufficient for the exact expression of the Japanese language. Thus a syllabic script was invented, the *manyo-gana* in which Chinese characters were used as phonetic sounds, and as it took much time and labor to write Chinese characters, the original ideographs were abbreviated by Kibino Makibi (who lived at the Nara-epoch) so as to leave only a skeleton or the so-called radical of the sign. The syllables, thus obtained, reduced the elements of the Japanese script to forty-seven, by which fifty sounds could be represented. "Thenceforth, instead of the pain of committing to memory thousands of ideographs, and employing them with no little toil, it became possible to record the most complex thoughts by the aid of fifty simple syllables. Nevertheless, since the nation had come to regard Chinese literature as the classics of learning, scholars were still compelled to use Chinese ideographs and to follow Chinese rules of composition, so that the cursive forms of the Chinese characters remained the recognised script of educated men.[1] In the Heian Epoch, when the great prelate Kobo-daishi composed for mnemonic purposes, the rhyming syllabary (*iroha-uta*) called *Imayo*, the forms of the simplified characters may be considered as having finally crystallised into the syllabary known as the *Hira kana*." And this script is still in use.

We have to add that "O-no-Yasu-maro, by command of the Empress Gemmyo, compiled in 712 A. D. a history of the empire from the earliest days to the reign of Suiko. This work was called the *Kojiki*. A year later, the various provinces received Imperial instructions to prepare geographical accounts, each of itself, and these were collated into the *Fudoki*. During the next reign, the Empress Gensho continued this literary effort by causing Prince Toneri and others to compile the *Nihon Shoki*, comprising a historical narrative from the beginning of the empire to the reign of Jito. In these works, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, the most ancient traditions of the country are to be found. Shortly afterwards, six national histories were successively undertaken, the compilation of which continued down to the reign of the Emperor Daigo. All these older books were written in Chinese ideographs." The Japanese language in Japanese writings began to flourish in the Nara epoch and the literature of this golden age has been collected in a great work called the *Manyoshu* which contains many gems of simple but genuine poetry. P. C.

[1] We need scarcely call attention to the fact that Chinese writing being an ideographic script can be written and read by people who do not know the Chinese language. The Japanese and Chinese languages are very different, but a great part of Japanese literature, even to day, is written in Chinese script.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"WE CHRISTIANS."

To the Editor of The Open Court:

I cannot but be gratified by the consideration you have given (in your issue of September 27) to my remarks upon your "We Christians."

I am most interested in your subtle and ingenious defence of the *Forum* phrase. But while appreciating the careful explanation of your view, and taking it as a practical closure of the controversy, permit me to say that I am not convinced.

Indeed this sentence—"I have as good a title to the name Christian if not a better one, than the Pope of Rome," would seem to show that our difference of opinion is really fundamental; and that no successful persuasion upon either side is possible.

As to Agnosticism—here perhaps the difference *is* one rather of "words" than "meaning." You indeed *write* as if by using the words God, Soul, Immortality, with the same familiarity as the words Man, Mind, Mortality, you could acquire something like the same knowledge of their significance. But after all this cannot be your *thought*.

And I find that when it comes to serviceable information on these high themes, each of us, not being supernaturally informed by revelation, is in precisely the same boat of blankest ignorance. The only distinction lies in the different recognition of this ignorance. It does seem to me that every thoughtful Theist, Pantheist, or Atheist must be to a large extent Agnostic too.

For your very kind "personal remark" accept, Sir, my sincerely sympathetic thanks. ELLIS THURTELL.

THE OPEN COURT

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